

Dr. Peterson

***Atlanta Business Chronicle* Interview**

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1. If you were in charge, what would you do to improve the high school graduation rate in metro Atlanta and educational achievement at the K-12 level?

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the direction that is currently headed?

From Georgia Tech's perspective, we like to see our state's K-12 schools put a healthy emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education, not as a rival to the liberal arts curriculum, but as a complement to it. We offer a wide variety of enrichment opportunities (particularly in the summer) that tap into young people's desire to learn how the world works. These programs are offered through our Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics & Computing (CEISMC). Often, when I ask our incoming freshmen what sparked their interest in the STEM fields, they say that it was because of a related summer camp or after-school program.

To encourage STEM enthusiasm in our own backyard, we recently announced a new partnership with the Atlanta Public Schools, called the "APS Scholar program."

Through this program, Georgia Tech now offers automatic acceptance and will cover four-year in-state tuition scholarship and mandatory fees for all Atlanta Public Schools valedictorians and salutatorians who have successfully completed the prerequisite course work and our admission process. This has resulted in an almost 80 percent increase in the number of applications from APS students, and we more than doubled our enrollment from APS this year.

2. How serious of a problem do you believe Metro Atlanta's traffic is, and why?

What would you do to ease gridlock and improve transportation in metro Atlanta?

We have a number of experts here at Georgia Tech who are exploring these issues in-depth and devising potential solutions. Most of this work is being done through the Georgia Transportation Institute (GTI), which serves as a focal point for transportation

research in the state of Georgia. Georgia Institute of Technology is the lead institution, but it is joined by other affiliated members — the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, Southern Polytechnic State University, Mercer University, and Albany State University. Researchers affiliated with GTI are active in research on a broad range of topics including policy and planning, environmental issues, transportation technology, transportation infrastructure, and traffic operations.

3. What challenges or opportunities in metro Atlanta do you think deserve more attention than they are getting?

One of Atlanta's best-kept secrets is the area around Fifth and Spring streets in Midtown, known as Tech Square. The Association of University Research Parks (AURP) named Tech Square its "2014 Outstanding Research Park Award" winner. This was once an area of parking lots and underutilized real estate, but since its opening in 2003 it has become one of the country's premier research and innovation centers. The synergy between large companies that want to tap into Tech Square's resources and the inherent innovative spirit that exists at Georgia Tech allows large firms and small startups to come together to create solutions. It is very exciting. Some of the more recent companies to open "innovation centers" in Tech Square include Southern Company, Home Depot, Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) and Worldpay, along with AT&T Mobility and NCR. These large-company "innovation centers" interact with the existing talent and expertise of our students, faculty and staff, and all benefit. Both NCR and Worldpay have announced that they are moving their corporate headquarters to Midtown to be closer to Georgia Tech.

We are currently moving forward to build a High Performance Computing Center (HPCC) that will open in 2018 the heart of Tech Square. We think it will drive high-performance computing innovations by converging industry, research and educational leadership in a dynamic, world-class environment. We see it as the next phase in the growing entrepreneurship ecosystem being created in Tech Square, that will spur Atlanta's and Georgia's economic development by creating jobs, new tax revenues and

technology clusters, with a particular focus on FinTech, healthcare IT and data analytics.

Within the past year, our Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI²) in Tech Square has been a jobs dynamo. It has helped more than 1,100 Georgia manufacturers create or retain 2,335 jobs, save \$128 million, and increase sales (new or retained) by \$286 million. EI² assisted faculty members in evaluating 235 research innovations and helped form 31 new companies based on this intellectual property. In all, Georgia Tech research innovations drew \$33 million in direct investment and created 737 jobs. EI² also helped Georgia companies secure \$592 million in government contracts and create or save an estimated 11,850 jobs.

4. What Metro Atlanta leader do you most admire, and why?

John and Mary Brock are incredible leaders in their respective businesses, in the city of Atlanta, and here at Georgia Tech. I've had the opportunity to work closely with them on issues vital to the Institute and have been tremendously impressed by not only their acumen and ability to get things done, but also by their "innate goodness." Their leadership on Georgia Tech's highly successful Capital Campaign has been phenomenal, but their generosity to numerous endeavors that are making the world a better place for so many is inspiring and serves as a model to us all. [They will be honored Nov. 3, 2015, as Volunteer Fundraisers of the Year at the 33rd annual celebration of National Philanthropy Day by the Greater Atlanta Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP).]

John earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Georgia Tech, and Mary is an "Honorary Yellow Jacket," in recognition of all she has done for Georgia Tech. There is much to admire about them, but here are a few qualities that stand out to me:

- They obviously care deeply for each other and their family.

- They are both very focused and driven and are highly competitive (in the most positive way).
- They work as a “team,” but both are incredibly successful in their own right.

They are enormously generous with their time and personal commitment, particularly for the causes that they believe in.